

Transcription: James Holmes

Today is Wednesday, July 21st, 2010. My name is James Crabtree. I'll be interviewing Mr. James Holmes. This interview is being done by phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Holmes is at his home in Tyler, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to let us talk to you today. It's an honor for us. As I had mentioned to you before, this program is about saving your stories and some of your memories for future generations. I guess the best place to start is tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went in the military.

James Holmes: OK, what do I do. Oh, well I'm just an old country boy. I never left Panola County, of course it's Texas, went to school there and finished high school there and left there and never went back. I lived various places after that with my sister in Kansas City and then some in, later on in Henderson. I'm from that part of the country up there.

Yes sir. Did you grow up on a farm?

James Holmes: Not really. My family was farmers, but my daddy was a school teacher, so we lived kind of in town mostly.

Yes sir. And did you have any siblings?

James Holmes: I've got one daughter, a wonderful girl. She got three children and they got some grandchildren. We even got one, my daughter even got one grandchild that's an adopted child from China. They went over that and went to all the trouble to adopt one of them little Chinese girls. Cutest little thing you ever saw.

Oh that's great, that's great. When you were growing up, did you have any brothers or sisters?

James Holmes: Yeah, I got a raft of 'em.

How many?

James Holmes: Three brothers and two sisters.

Three brothers and two sisters. And growing up, did you have any plans to go into the military?

James Holmes: Not until the war came on, and I hadn't much choice. Go in ahead of time or let 'em draft me, so I decided I wanted to go in, and I joined the Air Force because I thought maybe I wouldn't have to walk around in all that mud and muck, all that mud and water ____ was just, didn't work out that way.

Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed? Do you remember that day?

James Holmes: I guess I was in Orange, Texas. See, I lived there for years.

Did you hear about it on the radio?

James Holmes: Oh, it was everywhere, ah yeah.

I know we talked earlier. You told me you were quite a bit older than a lot of the other -

James Holmes: Yeah, they called me Pappy on that crew I was on.

Pappy.

James Holmes: I was 29 years old. They were all, I don't think any of 'em were over about 22 or 3.

So you were pretty close then to the cut-off age I would guess.

James Holmes: Oh I don't, I think if you wanted to be in the Army at that time, with all the trouble the United States got into, I think they'd have took in any age sure. Just so you could stand up.

But you were 29 and you were in with guys that were 17, 18 years old.

James Holmes: No, they were older. I don't think the youngest was only about 19. I think a little tale got out, ____ some Mexican boy, wonderful kid, I think he was 19 years old.

So you actually then, you weren't drafted, you went and signed up.

James Holmes: I signed up, but it just, I ain't gonna lie to you, they told me was gonna git in it in about month, so I decided I'd try to keep out of that foot Army by joining the Air Force and I did.

And you were in Orange, Texas when you signed up?

James Holmes: I believe that's right.

And where did they send you to for your first training?

James Holmes: Well they sent me to, oh, that's gonna be hard to remember, they sent me to, I just, I can't remember. I spent time training in Dodge City, Kansas. Some in, I just can't remember, about four or five places. One of the places was in Texas.

What are some things you remember about training?

James Holmes: Oh, that constant business of marching and left flank and right flank, the rear march. We're at war, kids. I did get to do some at one base though, they, if I had worked in a store, in a business when I, before I came in and they needed somebody to work in them, what the Army has for these little PX's you know, and I got to work in there. They paid me extra. Like \$10 a month extra, yeah, sure did.

So when you were going through the training to be on a bomber crew, what role did they train you for in particular?

James Holmes: Well I was what they called a top turret, when they speak of it, they speak of flight engineer, crew chief. All my responsibilities was seeing everybody turn everything on and off mostly. I did the best job I could. We made a mission and Line got killed more than two on France. We got hit pretty good, but we finally made it home. Had a little old pilot, I ain't never forgot him, we had a little old pilot and when we got hit, we got permission to stop at a little old place down in Carrabeena somewhere called Rinkon Island, and we stopped there and they give us a little gasoline and sent us back on our way, and we were limping on three engines, and that uses more gas by far than four. So anyway we used more than four because you got them on fire. And then we went from there, oh I don't know.

What type of bomber did you fly in?

James Holmes: A 24.

A B-24.

James Holmes: Yeah.

And with your crew, I guess you finished your training and then you got sent over, were you sent to England?

James Holmes: No, got sent to Africa.

Africa, what was that like?

James Holmes: Then eventually I got sent over to England. I was based in Italy then. Mandura, Italy. I don't know where that is, but that's the name of it.

What was Africa like?

James Holmes: Well, I wasn't there very long. Actually they had to put me in the hospital there because when I left the United States, left Florida and flied down to Brazil and then on over to Africa, I got wet and I caught a cold and I had fever by the time I got to the base in Africa, and they made me stay there in a French and American hospital run by the French, I think it was French and English. I'm not sure. But they kept me there while I got over that fever. Then I got back on a crew. Actually the crew I was on then was not my regular crew. We were short a pilot, so they borrowed a pilot and he was a little old boy from Hollywood. He was something else. He wasn't very old. But actually we had a copilot named, I can't think of his name now. But he was a first class pilot. That little old boy from Hollywood was just a dude, that's all, and I tell you what, we made that mission to Tulon, France and got shot up, and on the way we stopped and got that gas and then we started coming back in. When we got low again on gas, nearly about before we got to base in Italy, and that son of a gun called a rain hard, he wanted to go around again. But the copilot, I wish I could think of his name. He was one hell of a nice fella and smart. He was about 30 years old. He was a pretty good pilot, but he says no, we ain't got enough gas to go in. He said see that gas gauge, we'll go down. So he went in on in on that rain, and as soon as we hit that runway, the water splashed all over and covered us in that airplane. But we got in on the ground, but as soon as we got on that ground, the inside crew including the officers, we all went to operation and told them we didn't want to fly another mission with that boy. Didn't think he had the ability. And so they took him off plane on air transport command somewhere and we never saw him again.

Wow. Now I imagine you were pretty close to all the members of your crew. How many missions, do you remember how many missions you did with them or how often you would fly a mission? Was it once a day, or every other day?

James Holmes: No, you didn't fly all that much. They were getting shot down right and left, you know, I mean plenty of 'em. What were you asking me about?

I was wondering how many missions you guys would fly, how often you would fly a mission?

James Holmes: I think in total missions I flew before I got shot down was only about, I don't know, I think about 10 or so, I don't know. We got shot up down in Tulon, France, and _____. Then when we left the next time, we got shot over Budapest, Hungary. We were bombing that German air base at Budapest, Hungary. When we got shot down, I was fortunate, we had the inboard engine got some kind of shell landed and just jerked and yanked that inboard engine on the right side plum out from the airplane, still left the wing hanging down off for temporary, but the gasoline going everywhere and just barely got out and got in a parachute. I believe it took me 30 minutes from 42,000 feet to get to the ground. It took a long time hanging in that thing. You was wondering what was gonna happen to you when you get to the ground, you know, and when I finally got down at the ground, them Germans all waiting for me like catching fly ball. But anyway, we made it back.

How many, when your plane was shot down - ?

James Holmes: Well let me tell you, as near as I know and can find out and can remember, three of them lost their lives either when the plane, it blew up right after we got out. I didn't much want to get out too good. One other I saw, one of the parachutes come out and come down and then it blew, and I could hear that terrible explosion and I looked around and the airplane just flying in part and pieces, and I'm just still hanging up there in the air. But as far as I can find out, I've never been able to see any of those guys. I talked to one or two of the guys left, but three of them got killed. One waist gunner, the nose gunner, you know his mother came all the way from Missouri for me, believe it or not, poor woman came up bust to find me. I was visiting my mother in Dallas at the time, how she found out I was there, so she came to Dallas to visit me, but I couldn't tell her nothing about her son. He was up in the front and I don't know whether he had gotten out of his turret and was trying to get out when it blew and killed him in, or whether he got killed by gunfire or what.

When you guys were hit, do you know if you were struck by a German plane or was it anti-aircraft -?

James Holmes: I think it was anti-aircraft fire. Yeah, I don't think there was a plane in the sky right around that time. Whether it's going in to, on a bombing run to bomb some military information installation in Budapest, Hungary.

Budapest.

James Holmes: Yeah.

When was this, did that happen? Do you remember the year? Was it '42 or '43?

James Holmes: Let's see, I went in the Army and I can't remember.

Sure, no I understand. When you got captured, I'm sure that was probably a pretty terrifying moment.

James Holmes: Well, you're scared to death, afraid you're going, I was scared when I was hanging in the parachute and coming down some nut might shoot me from the ground. But I finally got on the ground and a bunch of Germans just surrounded me and got me, and they treated me fairly decent as a prisoner, you know. One of them was going to start taking my watch off, except one of them little old German soldiers, now he must've been a pretty good guy, he slapped him right hard and let him, leave him alone. They never took it away until I got sent to that prison.

Did any of them speak any English to you?

James Holmes: I think most of them Germans could speak the English. We had to always watch out about that. Really didn't make much, we didn't have much to say to 'em. I'm sure we didn't walk around cussing them because we didn't want to get knocked over the head with a stick or something.

Sure. So when they captured you, did they pretty much quickly put you in a truck and send you off to prison?

James Holmes: If I remember right, they put me in the most horrible prison you ever saw in Budapest. That thing was horrible. They put you in a big old cell and you had a big old 5-gallon bucket for a toilet, no water and no nothing. They had to bring you what little water you got to drink and a piece of bread, slice of bread and some, we nicknamed it Ersatzkol, I think that's the German word for it official. Kind of a coffee, they boiled us a cup of that and one piece of old hard toast for breakfast, and then sometime like 3 o'clock in the afternoon, they brought us kind of a soup, mushy stuff, I couldn't hardly eat it. I lost 60 pounds in that prison in the whole time.

Wow, how big were you when you started off?

James Holmes: I weighed 200 pounds and come out weighing 140. Yeah, I could raise my arms and you could count every rib. I was glad to get out though.

I'll bet. How long did you end up being held?

James Holmes: I believe it was 9 months in that place. That's the best I remember. And while I was in there, in the regular prison camp behind the bob wire and in them barracks they had for us, they put a sign on a bulletin board that if there's anybody there knew anything about shoe repairs to let 'em know, because the Red Cross out of Switzerland had brought in some machinery and stuff to try to repair some of the shoes. But the Americans didn't hardly need no shoes repaired. They'd rip the edges up sometime and you had to sew 'em, but I just, the machines they had I couldn't use. I used a needle, a big old needle like you use to sew big old thick cord and I sewed the shoes back together where they rip 'em around the tongues, you know, and I did that for a long time.

Did they keep you in a cell by yourself?

James Holmes: No, you were always had a room in that barracks, in that main prison that they got, well they kept me on barracks when I was in that Budapest prison. That was one rugged place. Man, I could barely reach on standing on the corner on an old bunk bed and look out the window and see ‘em just marching, no ending, Jewish prisoners all over the place. You could tell that they were Jewish.

They had the yellow star?

James Holmes: Had stars on them, yeah, but I mean they must’ve had several hundred in there. I don’t know whether they were just locked up for any other thing other than just being Jews or what, but that’s the way it was.

Did they keep you with the other American prisoners separate from the Jewish prisoners?

James Holmes: Yeah, there was nobody in our gang. In that room I was in there, there was several of us in there altogether.

Were you able to get word home to your family?

James Holmes: No, but the International Red Cross did. They knew exactly when I got shot down and all about it, and knew that I was living. That’s about all they learned.

And was the Red Cross able to get any letters to you from your family?

James Holmes: I got some, believe it or not I did. And I think they got some of mine. I remember I got some of mine and I got two or three letters that came to me from them. That International Red Cross out of Switzerland was a humdinger, I’ll tell you. I guess that the one in the United States is the same. That thing was good.

How did your parents hold up or did they ever tell you how they held up dealing with the fact that you were in a war camp?

James Holmes: Well, we’d already lost, my sister-in-law already lost one son in the conflict. He got shot down over the North Sea and they don’t really know whether he got killed by bullets from an airplane attacked ‘em or because there wouldn’t be no artillery out there, you know, it was over the ocean.

So you had an older sister?

James Holmes: Yeah, I had an older sister.

That had a son that was -

James Holmes: And he got killed, yeah, he got shot down in the North Sea near as we could find out from the Red Cross or whatever, and I don’t know whether he got killed with armor or whether he just got killed when he got in the freezing cold weather up there, or died from that, but he never made it home.

Was he on a bomber?

James Holmes: Yeah, he was on a bomber. He was a bombardier on a bomber. He went in just before, like so many, before he knew he was gonna draft, he didn't have any dependents, and he went in and went in thinking he was gonna take flight training and they washed him out of the pilot and made him a bombardier.

So he was your nephew but he was pretty close in age to you, then.

James Holmes: Yeah, he was way close.

Did you know him pretty well growing up?

James Holmes: Oh yeah, sure. He was a wonderful kid. His daddy was a very prominent musician and he had written a number of songs and was quite talented for that.

Did he live in the Orange area, too?

James Holmes: No, he was in Dallas.

OK. And where were you when you found out that he had been lost?

James Holmes: I hadn't yet gotten in the Army. That happened before I got in, yeah.

Did you have any other siblings or relatives that were serving when you were in?

James Holmes: Not that I can think of. I'm sure somebody, maybe cousins down the line somewhere. There are a raft of kinfolks I think. Thank God most of them are pretty good people.

When you were being held for that long of a period of time, I think a lot of people have a hard time even understanding what that would be like, how did you pass the time or what did you do to keep your morale up?

James Holmes: Didn't need to do nothing much, you just had to take it and live with it. I don't know what you'd be trying – they didn't beat on you or kick you around or nothing. Now at the end there, the Russians running around that camp, now that gets into a long story.

Well sure, well tell us.

James Holmes: The Russians run 'em out of there and they just put us on the road with 100 POWs with about 10 or 15, always 10 or 15 German guards, and they would just march us every day, no place, and put us in people's barns if they could find one big enough to hold us all. Some of those farmers didn't seem like they minded, those German farmers some of them weren't too kind. Some of them old women on some of them farms trying to fix us a little something to eat because we was hurtin' all the time for something to eat.

I've done some interviews, sir, with other prisoners there in World War II that were kind of in the same situation as you were. They said that the Russians were coming and their German guards were afraid of being captured by the Russians so they just did a force march kind of like sounds like the situation you were in.

James Holmes: We just marched every day and at night we'd fall down and sleep, and sometime the first few days when I left there, slept every night in the snow. What I did is each one of us had a blanket been issued to us by the Red Cross, and we put down one blanket and then two on top and get three guys, sometimes four guys all hubbed up together and we could take that weather pretty good. I didn't get frostbit as far as I know.

You could tell though I guess if the Germans were afraid of being captured by the Russians?

James Holmes: I think they were more afraid of them recapturing us. I think we got to the prison, that's what they were concerned about more. As far as themselves being captured, I think they had enough information about how the Americans would treat 'em and Americans treated Germans pretty good. There was a bunch of them around home there in some camp out there close to home, and hell all you needed is did a little work, had good food and a good place to sleep. So I think Americans, well we had the facilities to do it. The Germans probably just didn't have the facilities.

During that time you were being held, did you ever have any doubt that you would eventually be free and be able to come back home?

James Holmes: Well you never knew if you would live whether you knew that. You couldn't get really the best information about the war you got to live off. You got mostly information from the additional fellows that got shot down and came in to tell you things. One thing I never forgot, I ain't ever forgot this. There was a group that came in and they were talking, see England got bombed something terrible, you know, and there was a group of bombers that came out of England bombing us during the time we was all walking around in the middle of that what they called the Battle of the Bulge. Well we're in devil about not getting run over the tanks and the military equipment on all sides, both American and the Germans, and then but anyway, I don't know what the hell I was thinking to say. At 96 you ain't too sharp anyway.

No sir, I'm impressed. I think you've got a great memory. You were mentioning though that these guys would get shot down and they would come to your camp -

James Holmes: They'd come in and they were telling us about when the British, the British never gave up bombing the Americans, but you know every time the war was bad, the Americans ground troops wouldn't try. We all thought that was kind of weakly and didn't like that much. But we knew the British were bombing all the time, bombing even close to us there in that Battle of the Bulge. That was something where I thanked God to get through that because I never knew when I was gonna run over the, seemed like the Germans, they didn't, wasn't interested in just trying to kill you just for the hell of it. I'm sure there was cases where they did, but I never knew of any.

Yeah, there's a famous case of the Malmady Massacre later in the war where the Germans shot and killed a bunch of American soldiers that had surrendered, and that was a pretty horrible situation. But it sounds like in your case, they took pretty good care of you for the most part.

James Holmes: As best they could, they sure did.

Did any of the guards, you mentioned earlier that a lot of the Germans spoke English. Were there many that actually ever talk to you?

James Holmes: You never knew who could speak English. They was simply to find out that you was more than you thought could. We were careful what we said. We didn't run around bad mouthing them too much because you never knew when one understood you.

Were there any of the guards that actually did talk to you?

James Holmes: Talk to me, yeah.

Was it always just strictly –

James Holmes: Just strictly what's going on, what you got to do, what they're gonna do about you and all that. The part I hated about being in that camp the most was when I was crazy enough to volunteer to try to help fix them old shoes. What we fixed was mostly for the dam Russian prisoners they had. They were fixing them so they would have something on their feet, and you know, they rip 'em, and tear 'em. I couldn't use the machines they had. They just wasn't adequate. I'd worked on shoes and I knew some machines, but those kinds were some I didn't know how to use or something. I never learned to use 'em. I just used a big old heavy needle and a cord they called thread.

And do you remember the day you finally were freed?

James Holmes: You'd think I'd remember that, but I swear to God I can't.

I guess at one point though because the Russians were coming -

James Holmes: It wasn't long until the end of the war, that's all I know.

Did the German –

James Holmes: Actually the Germans at the very final end, the Americans kind of had us trapped down in there with a bunch of them German prisoners. The German guards and a bunch of us, and they actually just marched us across a river and got us across a river and marched us right over and handed it over to the Americans. I figured they figured that was the best thing to do under the circumstances. They couldn't care for us anymore.

Sure. When you finally got to go home, do you remember finally getting to be back home again?

James Holmes: Yeah.

Tell us a little about that.

James Holmes: Well I came back to what's the name of that big area, a big camp here in Texas?

Was it Fort Hood?

James Holmes: San Antonio was where it was.

Fort Sam Houston?

James Holmes: I was in the hospital in Houston. I don't remember what hospital. Oh, Aviation and Convalescent, something about Aviation Convalescent Hospital or something, the United States had the names there for it.

I guess they had to get you checked out you'd lost so much weight.

James Holmes: Oh yeah, I lost so much weight and they kept me there and tried to fatten me up. I come home from Europe on a cargo ship that was in a whole convoy of ships coming back and lo and behold, we got about halfway home, but still very cold country up there close, I guess close to Alaska, running into some damn icebergs and one of their ships just above us. We was all in formation, I guess about 50 big old boats and had a few destroyers bouncing around and going wonk, wonk all the time, stunning in and out, and wondered why they had to do all that honking, but they did. But anyway, I came back on a boat and when I got to New York City and they took me off there and put me in the hospital there for a while and then I went into San Antonio for a long time.

When was it you got to see your family again?

James Holmes: Not long before I got out. Well it was in '45, wasn't it? I got out in '45.

And during that time were you already married or engaged?

James Holmes: Oh yeah, I had a wife. No children at that stage. My daughter came after I got back from the Army. I have a wonderful daughter. She works something to do with you've heard the word Omnibusman, that's something like you go around on a bus. I tell you it ain't got nothing to do but going around and bug all these rest homes and see if they're treating the people right.

Oh that's great.

James Holmes: I laugh, I came pretty close into one where she came in and I said what did they say to you? She said nothing. When I walk in one of them front doors, they pay attention because I know I ain't much, but they know what I can do to cause some concern about it. Her job was seeing everybody kind of got a fair shake, did the best they could.

That's important, yes sir. When you were being held as a prisoner and all, how did your wife handle that? Did she hold up OK?

James Holmes: Oh yeah I guess so. She worked for her father. Her father had a big old store and she had kind of helped him a little bit before we got married, but then she wasn't there for a long time when we were married and then when I got in the Army, she went back home and went to work for her daddy in his store.

Was that in Orange?

James Holmes: No, that was in Henderson. She was raised in Henderson. I was born in ____, Panola County, pretty close to that.

So were you in Henderson too then when you joined up?

James Holmes: Well yeah, my family lived in Henderson. My mother and my sister worked for something, I don't remember what. It's kind of like it was for the government, too. Everybody worked for the government during the war, you know.

Sure, yeah.

James Holmes: But she worked there and my mother lived there and my daddy had already passed away.

When you got drafted, what type of work were you doing? Or you were about to get drafted?

James Holmes: Oh, I worked for Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. That's a good company, too. I have nothing bad to say about 'em. They were good to us and just all right.

Did you go back to work for them when you got back home?

James Holmes: When I got back, I worked for them a good long time and then I got a job with what I call traveling. I had 13 counties and supervised both the dealer and they had several stores, four or five company stores and about 15-20 tire dealers all during that tour. I went around agitating them, doing what the company told me to see about. I had great respect for Goodyear out there at the final end and the time I spent with them.

That's great. I know you were gone obviously during the war, but I know there was a lot of rationing of goods and tires and things of that sort. Did any of that rationing take place before when you were still working for Goodyear?

James Holmes: Oh yeah.

I think they limited the number of tires people could buy, is that right?

James Holmes: You had to have a certificate to get any at all and you had to have a need for them, and there was a little abuse of that for people that had the right connections, but not much. Most people just did the best they could with what they could get.

Sure.

James Holmes: It wasn't a bad program I don't believe. A lot of people cussed it, but I think it was a pretty fair program.

Sure. Well there was such a shortage of everything. I know you had to have ration books and everything for things that we take for granted today. I don't think the average American has any idea that there was rationing going on or victory gardens or any of that. Just a completely foreign concept to most folks.

James Holmes: Yeah, they encouraged everybody to grow a garden. I remember that. I never got into any of that, but I wasn't in a situation where I could do it I guess. I didn't have anything to do with that part of it.

I was going to ask you too, sir, you mentioned you're 96, right?

James Holmes: I'll be 96 in August. August the 3rd, 1914, I was born.

August the 3rd.

James Holmes: That's old.

I was gonna ask you sir, because you sound like you're in great shape. Do you have sort of secrets for your longevity?

James Holmes: Well I always eat good food. I was a lover of milk from the word go. I drank a million barrels of good milk and I think that's one of the things that made me as healthy as I was, and then of course I took care of myself. I wasn't crazy. I did the right things I guess.

You didn't I guess drink or smoke?

James Holmes: No, I started trying to learn to smoke when I was about 19 years old and I thought man, this is silly, and I just threw it away and never for it. Even though I married a woman, my wife smoked like a tar killing, and bless her heart, she tried every way in the world to quit that. That's an addiction. If you're a good smoker, you can hardly quit. The heart doctor even told her to take hypnosis, and she had herself hypnotized and she was just thinking when she come out of there she wouldn't never want a cigarette anymore, but I remember this so well when I went to the hospital and got her and everything, I figured that business, and on our way coming out of there, the first thing she said, where's my cigarettes? It didn't do a bit of good.

And then you only got just four more years to reach 100. That's quite a milestone.

James Holmes: My mother lived to be 101.

Wow, and who is that?

James Holmes: My mother. My daddy died at 69. He was a school teacher and I want to tell you something, not because of my mother, but he was a good man. He loved his work, what he did with those kids. He was school teacher in a classroom for a period of time and then finally he got elected. In those days, they had an elected county superintendents who were more or less in charge of all that stuff as much as it could be, and he was elected superintendent of schools for two terms, and then he died. My mother used to say the kids just drove him crazy and he died before his time. He should've lived longer than that. He only lived about 69 years old.

And that was in Henderson?

James Holmes: Well he taught several different places – Panola County and different towns.

Where was he the elected superintendent?

James Holmes: In Panola County.

Panola County. And you know, 69 though, that's a pretty good age especially at that time. I guess the life expectancy was probably less than that, but that's amazing your mother lived to 101.

James Holmes: She lived until 101. She died, she was back in Dallas with my two sisters. One of my sisters was married, but one of the sisters worked for the Internal Revenue for years. She was sane but she never got married. Wonderful girls, those two girls were, boy I'll tell you right now. Wasn't anything bad about 'em.

You mentioned you had a daughter and then -

James Holmes: Yeah, great daughter. She's worried about me. I have to put up with her calling me at least twice a day I tell her to be sure I was still living. At least twice a day she comes and gets me and then I've got the most wonderful break I ever got from about anything. We learned about a young Mexican woman, had two children and a husband that worked here at one of these nurseries, and she had been cleaning houses for people, and they got in touch with her and she first started cleaning my house. I've been living in this house which I have my own home, and she was cleaning it for a while and then finally broke down, she came to a point where she could come five days a week. She would come seldom but my daughter would not let her work on Saturday and Sunday, and that woman got two children and she needs to be home feeding about things. She won't let her work Saturday and Sunday, but she comes Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, every day gets here just about before 12 o'clock. We go the post office and tend to business there and go to the bank, see what I have to do, go eat together. We gave all the restaurants in this town and I can tell you which ones got stuff that you can tolerate and what you can't. We tried it all.

Well that's great, I tell you -

James Holmes: She's been a wonderful help to me. We are proud of her because not only that, she's a good woman morally and I can tell, she's just a good old Mexican girl. She's about 30 something years old. She's pretty young. She's got a lovely little daughter that's about 16 or 17, something like that, and she's a competent pianist. She can play a piano. She came in, I got an organ in my house here and I bought it, I don't know why I did but I just bought it, and she comes over here and she plays that and she can play on it good, and piano good. She's got some abilities. Right now she's working for a meat packing company, but she don't have to cut the beef and all that. She does some other kind of a job for them but I told her mother just the other day she left the end of the day and was talkin' about it, I said she's got the ability and speaks good English, speaks good Mexican, and she needs a better job than that and so they're kind of keepin' their eye out for one and hoping she'll get some kind of a better job. The little old boy, he came the other day. All I know he's just Junior. He's something else. He's just altogether get in the way. He's something else.

Do you have any grandchildren?

James Holmes: Yeah, let me think now. Well ___ had a son, that was my granddaughter, he got killed. And ___ but I got a brother in them Aleutian Homes that had, he got let's see, he got four children I believe, and three of them are still living and they live pretty close here and they come to see me once in a while.

That's great. Do you have any great grandchildren?

James Holmes: No, guess not. Who would that be? Yeah, I got great grandchildren. My daughter's got some kids, that's grandkids ain't it?

You have grandkids but I didn't know if any of your grandkids had kids.

James Holmes: Oh my daughter, she's got Whitney, he's married and he's in the Air Force now. And he's married and then there's David, the next goy. He worked for Chevron oil company and he's got a fabulous job and it's because he has enormous ability, how he developed it I don't know, but he can do anything in the world, this computer stuff, and that's why Chevron and the booger makes \$10,000 or more. I wouldn't give 50 cents knowing what I know about it, but that Chevron thinks a lot of him. They sent him to Iraq and Iran and all them damn places. Incidentally when he comes back, he said there was people in Iraq down there, they ain't gonna be no peace over there until the United States sees it. The Iraqi government starts giving the people some of that money instead of wasting it on all kind of stuff. They are reminded by Kuwait. It seems that's Kuwait's got a program in that country where every citizen gets a little money, and in Iraq, apparently they gob it all up and build old big buildings and all kind of junk they don't have no more need than the man in the moon he said. And he said the oil in Iraq there, there ain't gonna be no peace until they get that thing straightened out, the way the government's going. Not take advantage of them about that money. They got all kind of oil money.

Well that's right and they finally had some elections over there and forming a government and hopefully getting some more stability, better than what they had under Saddam and his tyranny.

James Holmes: He said they didn't make any bones about it. Ain't gonna be no peace over here. People are gonna be rabbling around until they get that money straightened out about this country. Of course he said they were blaming the American government for allowing it, and that's profit, too.

Well sir, I'm sure they're all proud of you and your service.

James Holmes: Well I don't know why, I'm just another old soldier just happened to have been a misfortune to get shot down by the luck of the, I don't know, luck of something I just didn't get killed. I came awful close to it.

Yes sir. Well I know everybody here at the land office is very proud of your service and thankful for your service to our country.

James Holmes: When are they gonna finish that apartment house out there for the old people. I understand POWs is eligible for it automatic.

Yes sir, and they'll get it done pretty quick. That thing that you attended was the groundbreaking and I don't know how long it will take them, but not all that long.

James Holmes: A year I imagine.

I know the goal is to get it built as quickly as possible.

James Holmes: They got a place that will take us over here in Anderson, Texas, but it's always full and never a vacancy. I spent six months in an assisted living place and if I remember right, there is no kind of insurance I know they paid on it, it cost me \$4,100 a month and thank God I had that much coming in. Lord bless me, I had a pretty good income, and I spent it all for every

six months of that assisted living thing, so I just hope and pray when I get ready to go in that rest home business it can be that deal where I understand this building ya'll are putting up out there, now it's gonna be for POWs and scot free, no cost.

It's a good deal for all veterans. I'm not sure what some of the special provisions are, but it's much cheaper for all veterans it's much cheaper than any other home they could be in, and they are state of the art and really well run.

James Holmes: The people that have been talking to me about it, various people that know about that thing say that I'll be able to go scot free.

Well that's great.

James Holmes: I'll be glad. And I ain't all that cheap. I just want to save money I accumulated. I had some pretty good business spent. I ended up with a lot of money.

You've earned it.

James Holmes: And I don't want it to all be goin' so my daughter won't get it.

That's right, pass along what you've earned. Well sir, I don't want to take up too much of your time.

James Holmes: I ain't got nothin' but time nowadays.

Yes sir, well it's been an honor for me to be able to talk to you a little bit, and like I mentioned before we started this interview, we're gonna send you copies of this interview that you can keep or give to your daughter or your friends.

James Holmes: My daughter's got all them kind of machines. I ain't got a computer and I'm glad I don't. I don't want to worry about it.

Just a CD player.

James Holmes: I got cable TV and I got 100 channels and about 92 of 'em ain't worth turning on, and about 8 or 9 got good movies and everything else. I appreciate it. Of course they charge me \$64 a month.

That's right. You can choose the ones you want.

James Holmes: I enjoy it.

Well sir, we'll be sending you that along with a nice certificate and letter from Commissioner Patterson and it's just, it's an honor to talk to you and then I'll be back in touch with you as well if you have any pictures or anything like that.

James Holmes: Just something I didn't even never _____. Believe it or not, there's a woman in Missouri I never heard of. She's about 50 years old. I think her husband was, I'm not sure about any, but her husband was a private in the Air Force in the same bomb group I was in and I got shot down but he got home. He made it home. She saw that somewhere on her computer she

picked it up somehow. But now my daughter got some stuff that they know all about – it's amazing how they got all that stuff.

Oh yes sir, and track people down or try to find them. It's easier than in the old detective days I think now. Well sir again, it's been an honor to talk to you and I'll be in touch with you again soon.

James Holmes: I appreciate it son.

Yes sir, well we appreciate you and –

James Holmes: Oh, don't worry about it. I'm just another old soldier that didn't have too good of luck. Yeah, I did have good luck. I lived.

I aspire one day to be your age and be able to tell people about my service.

James Holmes: What branch of service are you in?

The Marine Corps.

James Holmes: You're in the Marine Corps?

Yes sir. So to me it means a lot that we're able to get your interview and we can keep it for future generations so people don't forget. That's really an important thing, people remember what others have done before them.

James Holmes: Well thank you a lot.

Yes sir, well thank you very much and we'll talk to you again soon.

James Holmes: Bye.

All right, take care. Bye bye.

[End of recording]